

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, June 9, 2000

Governor Issues Statement on Adoption Subsidy

By Ken Patterson

Governor Leavitt held a press conference at the DCFS State Office on Friday afternoon. He expressed praise for the strong gains the Division has made with the courts and adoptive parents in creating permanency for so many children. He announced that he is directing DCFS to work with each adoptive parent who had their adoption subsidy contract revised in the past six months to review and restore the level of support where appropriate. He called on the legislature to carefully consider the full scope and need of the adoption subsidy program. In essence, we will be maintaining previous levels of support (where appropriate) to families affected by the shortfall in adoption subsidy budget through March of 2001, giving the legislature time to consider the entire scope and policy of the adoption subsidy program. I will be giving Region Directors more information at our Tuesday meeting.

A Word of Appreciation to Sally Tasker

By Caren Frost and Ken Patterson

At the end of May 2000, Sally Tasker, one of our State Specialists, went to work for the Foster Care Citizen's Review Board in Northern Region. Sally was the Out-of-Home Care State Specialist as well as the Accreditation Coordinator for the DCFS. While working on out-of-home care program issues, Sally was instrumental in policy development and ensuring that most of the information about foster care that we use in SAFE was connected to policy and was designed in such a way as to be very useful to foster care workers. Last year, Sally undertook the role of Accreditation Coordinator while continuing to work in an effective way on out-of-home care activities. Sally is responsible for moving DCFS forward in the accreditation process—we will submit our application in July 2000 and will be beginning our self-study. Ken and I wanted to write this special note to publicly thank Sally for all of her efforts on behalf of DCFS caseworkers, and especially to better the lives of the children and families we serve. We wish her the best in her new endeavor and look forward to our continued contact with her!

Practice Tips

By Richard Anderson

A child's world is unique. A caring adult is respectful of the differences between the adult world and the child's world (Practice Principles #2 and #4).

"It's easy to forget how much of the existence of a seven-year-old child has to do with things that are not big at all and do not lend themselves to generalities and are, indeed, so small and so specific that they would seldom earn a mention in a government report or book of sociology. The life of a child, after all, is made up not of social 'constructs' or developmental 'trends,' but of much smaller things like stomachaches or hurtful words or red Crayola crayons. A narrow lens, I think, is often better than a wide one in discerning what a child's life is really like and

what distinguishes one child's personality and inner world from those of twenty other children who may live in the same neighborhood and go to the same church or school...

"I think of this inevitably when I am with Elio because his character and tastes do not belong to any of those intellectual compartments in which inner-city children of his economic class and race are generally placed...it is the differences, rather than the similarities, that always strike me as the most important and most interesting things about them."

This excerpt is from Jonathan Kozol's latest book about children in New York's South Bronx. The book is entitled Ordinary Resurrections (I just finished it, and I recommend it).

Let us continue to see the uniqueness of each child. Let us remember to kneel to their level, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, to capture who they are and to learn how best to help them.

Accreditation and DCFS

By Carol Miller

DCFS is currently in the process of seeking accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA) of Services for Families and Children, Inc. To date, a work group has been established and has drafted the application, which is tentatively scheduled to be submitted to COA in July 2000. In addition, the work group has begun reviewing the COA standards to rate how DCFS currently meets them. From this information, we will submit our self-study to COA, and a site visit will be scheduled. The accreditation process usually takes approximately 18 months from the time of application submittal to complete.

The exciting news—as determined by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) during its pre-assessment of DCFS, we are currently meeting most, if not all, of these standards. This means there will be no additional work for field staff, other than perhaps a work group member contacting individuals to obtain their expertise as this process moves along.

The work group specifically asked Ken Patterson for his reasons why DCFS should seek accreditation at this point in time. His thoughts are as follows:

- DCFS should seek accreditation BECAUSE WE CAN! We are already doing most of the work; we can proudly wear the title.
- Accreditation provides for a good seal of approval and consumer protection.
- Accreditation will set us apart and provide "safety" against potential lawsuits.
- DCFS will join a group of leaders. If we stay on our current accreditation timeline, we will be the fourth state to become accredited.
- It will provide incentive to maintain the level of services required for accreditation.

Additional information will be forwarded as progress is made in this process. Please contact me at (801) 538-4451 or by e-mail if you have any questions or comments about DCFS and accreditation.

The Mini-Qualitative Case Review

By Caren Frost

By now, some of you have participated in an abbreviated version of the qualitative case review (QCR). Adrian Warr, who works directly for Paul Vincent from the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (CWPPG), is conducting this mini-QCR for us. The purpose of this review is to highlight the appropriateness of the decisions made on the high cost cases that were “stepped down” beginning in December 1999.

Adrian and I selected 25 cases, about three per region, for this review. We specifically selected cases where a child or youth was in a high cost placement and then returned home—those seemed to be the most concerning cases to a variety of our community partners. In addition, Robin Arnold-Williams added some cases that had been brought to her attention for Adrian to review as well.

Adrian hopes to have the review completed and a report drafted by the end of June 2000. I will share the results with you at that time. I have appreciated everyone’s cooperation on this project. In this very busy time, thank you for your efforts in working with Adrian and providing information to her!